

REMARKS

Claims 3-11 and 13-23 are pending in the present application. Claims 3-11 and 13-21 have been amended. Claims 22 and 23 have been presented herewith. Claims 1, 2 and 12 have been canceled.

Priority Under 35 U.S.C. 119

Applicants note the Examiner's acknowledgment of the Claim for Priority under 35 U.S.C. 119, and receipt of the certified copy of the priority document.

Drawings

Applicants note the Examiner's acceptance of the drawings as filed along with the present application on July 16, 2003.

Claim Rejections-35 U.S.C. 112

Claims 2, 10 and 12 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. The claims have been amended to be in better compliance with 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw this rejection.

Claim Rejections-35 U.S.C. 103

Claim 1 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over

the Takemoto et al. reference (Japanese Patent Publication No. 4-52692). Claims 2, 12, 16, 17 and 20 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Takemoto et al. reference in view of the Baiker et al. reference (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2001/0014161). Claims 10, 11, 18, 19 and 21 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the Takemoto et al. reference and the Baiker et al. reference, in further view of the Ueta et al. reference (U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2003/0004701).

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants respectfully note the Examiner's acknowledgment that claims 3-9 and 13-15 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form.

In view of the Examiner's acknowledgment of allowable subject matter, claims 3, 6 and 13 have been amended to be in independent form, merely to advance prosecution of this application. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to acknowledge that claims 3-11 and 13-21 are allowed.

Claims 22 and 23

Applicants respectfully submit that claims 22 and 23, as dependent upon claim 3, should be considered as allowable for at least the same reasons as claim 3, and by further reason of the features therein.

Conclusion

Since the above noted amendments have been made merely to place the claims in independent form in view of the acknowledgment of allowable subject matter and/or merely to improve claim form, rather than to further distinguish over the relied upon prior art, the above noted amendments should not be construed as narrowing scope within the meaning of *Festo*.

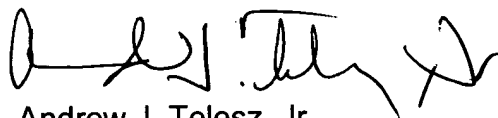
The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the corresponding rejections, and to pass the claims of the present application to issue, for at least the above reasons.

In the event that there are any outstanding matters remaining in the present application, please contact Andrew J. Telesz, Jr. (Reg. No. 33,581) at (571) 283-0720 in the Washington, D.C. area, to discuss these matters.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment for any additional fees that may be required, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 50-0238.

Respectfully submitted,

VOLENTINE FRANCOS & WHITT, P.L.L.C.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew J. Telesz, Jr.', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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